

CAROLINA TOURS HAS
PLANNED JUST FOR YOU...

Cajun Country Celebrates Mardi Gras!

February 17-22, 2012



ENJOY MARDI GRAS AS ONLY

THE CAJUNS KNOW HOW TO CELEBRATE!

After spending our first night on the Gulf Coast, we will then travel to New Orleans and enjoy a stop in the French Quarter before continuing to our destination, Lafayette, Louisiana, where we will spend the next 3 nights. While in Lafayette, we will be joined by a local guide as we learn the history of the Acadians, explore the Cajun culture and, of course, take in all the festivities of this home-style Mardi Gras. Highlights include the Krewe of Bonaparte Parade, Louisiana Courir D' Mardi Gras, Acadiana Mardi Gras festivities, tour of Martin's Accordion Factory with a special private performance, tour of Vermilionville, Mulate's Big Ole Cajun Dinner and Entertainment, Jean Lafitte Acadian Cultural Center, tour of St. Martinville, St. Martin des Lourdes, Konriko Rice Mill and Company Store, the Tabasco Factory and tour of Avery Island, a special Mardi Gras party with a King and Queen chosen from our group, the Children's Krewe of Lafayette, Krewe of Gabrielle's Parade plus much, much more! 11 meals included!! We will spend our last night in route home at the magnificent Wind Creek Casino & Hotel. Have you always wanted to visit New Orleans during Mardi Gras...but didn't want the crowds and the rowdiness. Come to Lafayette instead...you'll have fun at this 'family' style celebration, plus learn to appreciate the Cajun culture and history!

YOUR PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- *roundtrip deluxe motor coach transportation
- *5 nights' accommodations
with 3 nights in Lafayette
- *5 breakfasts *6 dinners/lunches
- *all guided tours and admissions as specified
- *2-3 Mardi Gras parades
- *A visit to Avery Island & the Tabasco Factory
- *baggage handling, taxes and meal gratuities
and much, much more!
- *Services of tour director

\$1249 PP/DOUBLE \$1399 PP/TRIPLE
\$1379 PP/QUAD \$1699 SINGLE

Send us your reservation
and deposit of \$400.00
soon, as possible!!



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Preliminary Itinerary

Day 1: Today we travel south through Georgia and Alabama, arriving at our first night's destination in the Mobile area.

Day 2: This morning we continue our tour, driving to New Orleans first where you will have some free time in the French Quarter. After you enjoy lunch at one of their many fine restaurants, we will make our way to Lafayette. Let the good times roll as we are welcomed to Lafayette - the heart of Cajun Country and the cultural center of Louisiana's heritage. Here you'll discover the rich history of the Louisiana's French, Spanish and Caribbean ancestors. Learn how these diverse cultures came together, creating art and architecture, music and dance, food and



celebrations and a "Joie de Vivre" that has influenced not only the lives of everyone in this state, but has made an impact on the entire world. We will have dinner tonight at one of Lafayette's finest restaurants. The largest night parade in Lafayette takes place tonight and we won't want to miss it! It is put on by the Krewe of Bonaparte with tremendous floats, doubloons, costumes, and bands. They will throw tons of beads, and we will get in the spirit of Mardi Gras immediately! You will need to bring a bag with handles to all parades! (B, D)

Day 3: Today we meet our local guide (Sharon from last year, I hope). She has many activities lined up for us. We will travel first to Church Point, Louisiana Courir D' Mardi Gras. We are going to the prairie outside of Lafayette. On our way we will drive by many crawfish ponds waiting to be harvested. This is the rural Acadiana Mardi Gras. 100's of costumed riders on horseback, decorated wagon, buggies and more. Lots of Cajun and Zydeco Music. (Zydeco Music has more of a Caribbean/African/Spanish beat). You will see horsemen going from house to house looking for ingredients for the gumbo. Dancing and good clean family fun. Yes, you will catch more beads than you can carry home.



A little Mardi Gras history: Elton Richard first formally organized the Church Point Courir de Mardi Gras in 1961. Until that point individual groups of men would ride horse back through the country on Mardi Gras Day begging for ingredients or money with which to buy ingredients, for a communal gumbo. The first organized courir included approximately 400 horsemen. Elton Richard of Church Point and Senator Paul Tate of Mamou decided that each town needed its own courir, and they flipped a coin to decide which town would have its courir on Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras Day, or on the Sunday before Mardi Gras. Mardi Gras, the French term for Fat Tuesday, is held on the eve of the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday. The results of the toss determined that Mamou would conduct its courir on Mardi Gras Day and the Church Point courir would take place on the Sunday before Mardi Gras.

On Louisiana's Cajun Prairie northwest of Lafayette, the annual celebration before the beginning of Lent takes on a completely different form. The first Acadians brought "Le Courir de Mardi Gras" or the "Running of the Mardi Gras" to French Louisiana when they immigrated to the area in the 1750's. The custom of European peasants merrymaking before a period of fasting and penitence was handed to them from medieval times and was practiced by the Romans before then. Traditionally, the rural Mardi Gras of today in Church Point is the same as it was in the old days of the early settlers. Men only can participate in the Courir (run). Tradition requires that all Mardi Gras participants be fully masked and costumed. Le Capitaine (The Captain) heads the group and he and his co-capitaines must ride unmasked. The first Capitaine was the founder of the Church Point Mardi Gras. The Capitaine is allowed to retain his title year after year until he chooses to relinquish it and then hands it down to the man of his choice. Each year the Capitaine appoints his "co-capitains" for the run that year.



After lunch, we will continue to Vermilionville. Set on 22 acres on the banks of the Bayou, Vermilion brings to life those days of early settlement from 1765 – 1890. This little community helps visitors coming to Lafayette understand what it was like living here 200 years ago. You will visit everything from the little church to the blacksmith shop. All of the lovely old buildings have been gently and lovingly restored. Stroll the grounds and absorb the rich history.

You will find things planted here that you have never seen before. Find the plants that were used to make rosaries. See the wonderful furnishings of yesteryear. Feel the peacefulness of yesteryear.

We are also in for a real treat this afternoon...Martin's Accordians. You will hear the history of the accordion and learn about the very long process of building one. This is a family run business and they love to entertain. They are Cajun to the bone. Talented and Smart! These amazing musicians will treat us to a tremendous performance. You will leave tapping your toes with a song in your heart. (I know those of you who were with me in December remember their grandson...he did win that Grammy for Cajun Music.) These are good down-home Lafayette folks, and everyone is so proud of them.

After a short rest break at the hotel, we are off again to MULATES BIG OLE CAJUN PARTY. Enjoy a Fais Do-Do (dance) at Lafayette's Original Cajun Restaurant featuring delicious Cajun food, live Cajun music and dancing. A local couple will join our group to demonstrate Cajun dancing, dance with us, and teach us Cajun dance steps. Yes, your guide will be right at your side. We will have reserved seating and a choice of 3 entrees. PLEASE get up and mingle. This is a place where the locals go, and they love introducing ourselves to visitors. Dance like no one is watching. (If you don't dance, they will probably think that you are a tourist.) We will return to the hotel after dinner and entertainment. Tomorrow is a 'jam-packed, full of excitement' day. (B, L, D)



Day 4: Today begins again with breakfast at the hotel. Our guide will then take us to the Jean Lafitte Acadian Cultural Center in Lafayette. The center tells stories of the origins, migration, settlement, and contemporary culture of the Acadians (Cajuns) and other area groups. Ranger programs, films, exhibits, and events share a variety of local traditions including music, story-telling, dance, and food, and explore the mysteries of the Atchafalaya Basin, Louisiana's wildest place. The film we will see is breathtaking and will give you a better understanding how their ancestors arrived here. This museum is also a teaching facility. If you are looking for books on the Acadian culture and history----this is where to buy them.

Our next stop will be in the quaint little town of St. Martinville. We'll see the Evangeline Oak and hear the love story of Evangeline and Gabriel. Yes, Longfellow the poet was inspired by the plight of the Acadians to write this famous epic poem. We will hear her story and how she grieved for her long-lost love, Gabriel. See her monument and visit the perpetual adoration Garden and historic cemetery. St. Martinville is the birthplace of Acadiana. Hear how the Acadians made their way from Acadie/Nova Scotia after the expulsion of the French. Visit the Evangeline Oak, mighty and stately. Last, but not least, we will tour the first Catholic church of the area---St. Martin de Tours. The stations of the cross are said to be as fine and beautiful as those found in the churches of Lourdes. This church is the Mother Church of the Acadians established in 1765.

After lunch, included, we will travel to the Konriko Rice Mill and Company to see the oldest working rice mill in America. We'll view an excellent audio-visual presentation of Acadiana and, of course, there will be unique product shopping opportunities. We'll start our tour in the KONRICO Company Store where you will see a historically correct presentation of the "Cajun" culture, how it began and how it developed. You will be guided through the old rice mill where you can watch the packaging of rice and the making of rice cakes. The mill creaks and groans, but still produces the finest quality rice in America. After the tour, feel free to browse through the collection of local foods, T-Shirts, Cajun jellies, even Cajun dance videos and music tapes. The assortment of interesting local products is said to be the best in Louisiana. They will also have one of their products cooking for us to sample free, plus the best coffee in town and some great recipes they have developed over the years.



A little history: Placed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Conrad Rice Mill is the oldest rice mill in America and one of the leading tourist attractions in this area of the Bayou Teche. A unique feature of the mill is it was originally built in 1914, and received additions in 1917 and 1930. This is significant because it is a rare surviving example of a factory using a belt-driven power transmission. P. A. Conrad founded the Conrad Rice Mill and Planting Company in 1912. He would cut the rice by hand and let it sun-dry on the levees before putting the rice in the threshers. The rice was poured into 100-pound bags and taken to the mill. At that time, the mill operated only three to four months out of the year. Conrad would sell his rice from inventory, waiting for the next crop to harvest. Conrad was an astute businessman, steadily growing his business to the point where he no longer grew enough rice to meet demands. Buying grain from the other growers in the area supplemented his own crop. To satisfy his customer's request, he also began selling rice in smaller sized bags. In the 1950's "KONRICO" was trademarked as an acronym for "CONRAD RICE COMPANY". In 1975 Mike Davis, a former teacher and farmer, bought the mill from the Conrad family and has made many changes and improvements to the site.

While on Avery Island, we will visit the Tabasco Factory to see the making and bottling of Tabasco Sauce at the only Tabasco factory in the world. We will first see their historical film, then take a brief tour and visit the museum. Tabasco pepper sauce was first produced by Edmund McIlhenny from capsicum pepper plants first grown in the post Civil War era. His recipe was so unique he was granted a patent on it. It is closely followed today. Tabasco Pepper sauce, other fine products and mementos can be purchased in the old fashioned Tabasco Country Store. You won't want to miss shopping in their Country Store...you will be able to sample many Tabasco products, including *Tabasco Ice Cream!*



We will have a little time to freshen up at our hotel and get ready for this evening's Mardi Gras festivities at the PETROLEUM CLUB OF LAFAYETTE. This is a lovely private facility with live entertainment with music from the 50's and 60's. You will be treated to a bountiful buffet, gumbo station, tremendous salads and desserts. This is the big Mardi Gras Party. A lady and gentleman from our group will be announced as King and Queen of the Mardi Gras! Each will receive capes and crowns and other surprises as they greet their subjects. They will then be part of the Royal Procession. Special Mardi Gras Beads will be given to everyone in our group. As a special treat you will also witness the presentation of the Children's Krewe of Lafayette. The costumes are so amazing and the kids are so cute! (You do NOT have to dress up for this dinner.)



At the end of the evening entertainment, we will return to our hotel. (B, L, D)

Day 5: This morning, it will be time to travel eastward as we start making our way back home. But, the fun is not over yet! After breakfast in the hotel, our guide will join the group for our final Mardi Gras parade, THE KREWE OF GABRIEL'S KINGS PARADE. This is Lafayette's largest all-male Krewe! Once we reach our designated private parking you will be treated to complimentary Fuzzy Navel's----our Mardi Gras special signature drink while waiting for the parade to begin. There will be bands, floats, tons of throws, and loads of fun!



Finally it will be time to bid our guide good-bye as we will depart Lafayette after the parade. It is only a 5 hour drive to our evening's destination. We will spend the night at the Wind Creek Resort and Casino. You will enjoy their buffet dinner and have free time in the casino if you wish. The rooms are lavishly appointed...I can't wait for you to enjoy all the amenities they offer. (B, D)

Day 6: Today we will make our way home to South Carolina. What a wonderful way to escape from the winter blahs and jump-start our new year! This is one tour we will never forget! (B)



Remember: "Expect something special when you travel with Carolina Tours!"